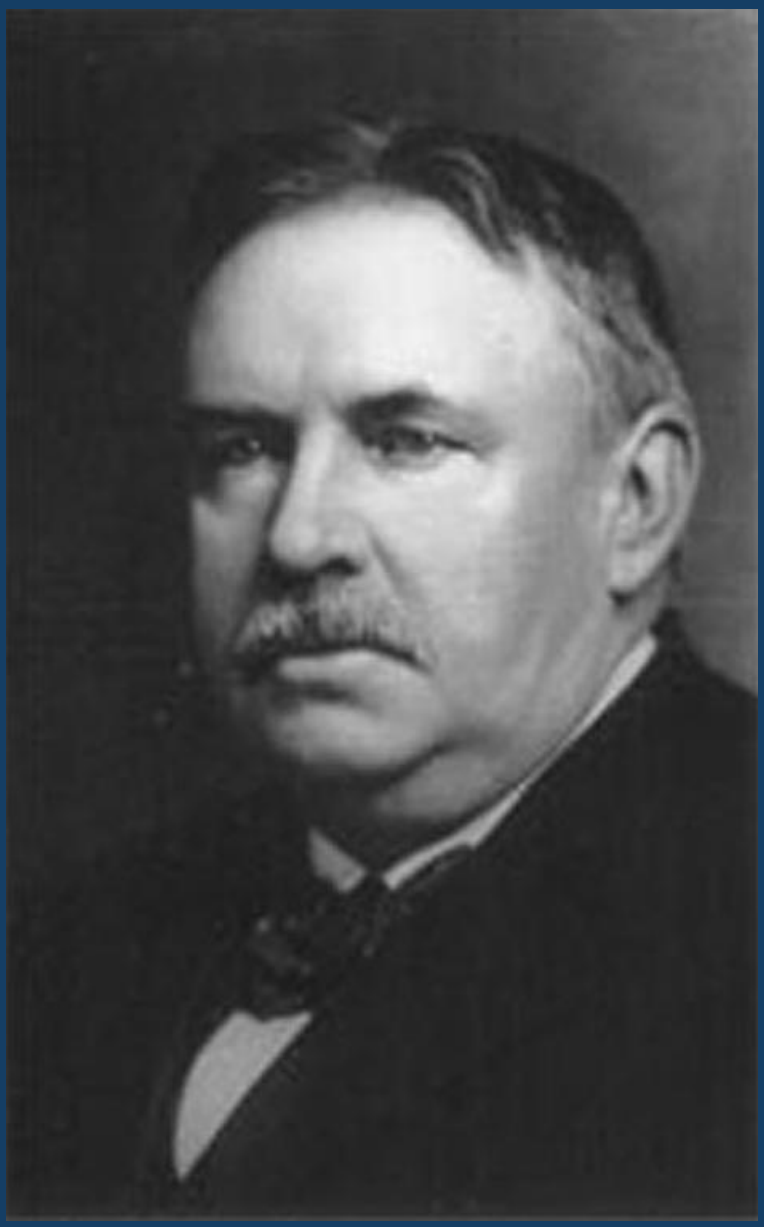
WILLIAM MILLIGAN SLOANE

(1850–1928)



William Milligan Sloane (12 November 1850 – 12 September 1928) was a distinguished American educator, historian, and cultural figure whose career bridged the worlds of scholarship and international sports diplomacy.

Early Life and Education

Born in Richmond, Ohio, Sloane graduated from Columbia College (now Columbia University) in 1868, where he was an active member of the Philolexian Society. Between 1872 and 1876, he pursued advanced studies at the Universities of Berlin and Leipzig, coming under the influence of eminent historians such as Theodor Mommsen and Johann Gustav Droysen. During this period, he also served as private secretary to the U.S. Minister in Berlin, George Bancroft. His doctoral dissertation, *The Poet Labid: His Life, Times, and Fragmentary Writings* (Leipzig, 1877), reflected his early philological and historical training under leading orientalists such as Fleischer, Krehl, and Loth.

Academic Career

Sloane began his teaching career at the College of New Jersey (Princeton University), where he was professor of Latin (1877–1883) and later professor of History (1883–1896). During his tenure, he also served as editor of the *Princeton Review* (1885–1888). In 1896, he accepted the position of Seth Low Professor of History at Columbia University, a chair he held until his retirement. His scholarship was wide-ranging, with important works on Napoleon Bonaparte, the French Revolution, and American political institutions.

Contribution to the Olympic Movement

Beyond academia, Sloane played a foundational role in the revival of the modern Olympic Games. A close associate of Pierre de Coubertin, he served on the International Olympic Committee (1894–1924) and was the founder and first chairman of the United States Olympic Committee. In this capacity, he accompanied the first American Olympic team to the Athens Games in 1896, linking American intellectual life with the emerging global culture of international sport.

Honors and Legacy

Sloane's contributions earned him widespread recognition. He was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Letters, served as President of the American Historical Association in 1911, and was decorated as a Chevalier of the French Legion of Honor and of the Order of the Polar Star (Sweden). He passed away at his home in Bay Head, New Jersey, on 12 September 1928. His life and achievements were later dramatized in the 1984 NBC mini-series *The First Olympics: Athens 1896*, where he was portrayed by actor David Ogden Stiers.

Personal Life

In 1877, William Milligan Sloane married Mary Espey Johnston. The couple had one son, James Renwick Sloane, who later married Isabel Hoyt. Their family continued in

prominence: James and Isabel became parents to twin sons, William Milligan Sloane and James Ross Sloane, born in Paris in January 1921. The grandson, William Milligan Sloane, went on to serve as a marine aviator and later built a career as a corporate lawyer, marrying Martha Chamberlin.

Major Publications

Sloane's intellectual production reflects his broad scholarly interests and his engagement with both classical and modern history:

- *The Poet Labid: His Life, Times, and Fragmentary Writings* (Leipzig, 1877)
- *Life and Work of James Renwick Wilson Sloane* (1888)
- *The French War and the Revolution* (1893)
- *The Life of Napoleon Bonaparte* (four volumes, 1896; revised and enlarged ed., 1911)
- *Life of James McCosh* (1896)
- *The French Revolution and Religious Reform* (1901)
- *Party Government in the United States of America* (1914)
- *The Balkans: A Laboratory of History* (New York & Cincinnati, 1914)

References

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2. "Prof. Sloane, Art Academy Head, Dies." *Wilmington Morning News*. New York: Associated Press. September 12, 1928, p. 2. Retrieved May 28, 2022 – via Newspapers.com.
3. "William M. Sloane '43." *Princeton Alumni Weekly*. 2007.

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